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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1218  
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INFO RUCNCCAN/ALL CANADIAN POSTS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHHA/AMCONSUL HALIFAX 1297

UNCLAS HALIFAX 000077

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FOR WHA/CAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV CA

SUBJECT: NEWFOUNDLAND-LABRADOR PROVINCIAL ELECTION NOW UNDERWAY

¶1. Tory Premier Danny Williams of Newfoundland-Labrador has gone through the formality of calling a provincial election for October 9. The Premier called on Lt. Governor Ed Roberts on September 17 to ask him to dissolve the Legislature and make way for what will be the province's first fixed-date election. Williams and his Tory party have ruled Newfoundland-Labrador since October 2003 after he defeated the incumbent Liberal government, a contest which left Williams with a comfortable majority. Standings in the 48-seat house at time of dissolution show the Tories with 34 seats, the Liberals with 11, the NDP with one. Two seats are vacant. Williams will be going up against two rookie opponents, Liberal Leader Gerry Reid and the NDP's Lorraine Michael, both of whom took over their respective parties this past year.

¶2. Premier Williams has enjoyed historically high support since taking office. The latest public opinion polls show that over three quarters of decided voters say they would back the Premier in the election. Those results have prompted election-watchers to use phrases such as landslide, sweep and decimation of the opposition forces in their predictions of the likely outcome of the election. Still, the Premier has warned his candidates and party workers not to take anything for granted.

¶3. Comment: Consul General and Political Specialist will be in Newfoundland-Labrador September 18-20 and will provide further analysis upon their return. End Comment.

FOSTER